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ABSTRACT

Socialization of the new principal is becoming an increasingly important issue calling for serious attention by practitioners, researchers, and educational policymakers. This paper attempts to contribute additional insight into the ways in which beginning school principals become socialized in their new school settings and the ways in which they are initiated into their roles. Findings are presented from a recently completed study of the major successes and problems encountered by public school principals during the first years on the job--specifically, their frustrations about being unable to do their jobs effectively due to insufficient preparation to achieve success. Major categories of concern requiring support include: problems with role clarification; limitations on technical expertise in dealing with procedural issues and interpersonal relations skills; and socialization in the profession and in individual school systems. A series of recommendations is given for modifying current principal preparation programs and induction strategies so that socialization in the role of the school building administrator may be less traumatic. An appendix relates supporting data, and 31 references are included. (WTH)

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THE HIGHEST HURDLES FOR THE FIRST YEAR PRINCIPAL

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THE HIGHEST HURDLES FOR THE FIRST YEAR PRINCIPAL

Merton (1963) defined socialization as the process by which "individuals selectively acquire the values and attitudes, interests and dispositions, skills, and knowledge current in the group in which they are members." Beyond this definition which looks primarily at the issue of how aspiring members of new social systems choose the ways in which they wish to belong, socialization must also be examined and understood in terms of the ways in which a new work environment tends to make demands on the individual. Thus, an even broader view of the process of socialization was presented by Cistone (1977) who noted simply that it is the process by which novice members become role incumbents.

Whatever the precise definition may be, the issue of socialization for school administrators is becoming an increasingly important issue calling for serious attention by practitioners, researchers, and educational policy makers. As a result, this paper has been prepared to add additional insight into the ways in which beginning school principals come "on board," The paper is directed toward an investigation of the ways in which school principals are initiated to their roles. The objective here is to present the findings of a recently-completed study which examined the major successes and problems encountered by public school principals during their first years on the job. Specifically, the paper describes how beginning principals have encountered frustrations related to their feelings of being unable to do their jobs effectively due to being insufficiently prepared to achieve success. The paper will also include a series of recommendations for modifying current principal preparation programs and induction strategies so that socialization to the role of the

school building administrator might be less traumatic as a process to be followed by future aspiring principals.

Rationale for the Study of Principals

The issue of examining more effective ways of bringing new principals "on line" is not a trivial one. Indeed, there is a significant amount of evidence that suggests, first, that the role of the principal is such an important one in terms of its impact on school effectiveness that it merits careful and continuing analysis. Second, there is ample reason to believe that the next few years will witness a large number of new individuals assuming school principalships for the first time.

The Principal as a Key to Effectiveness

Barth (1985) has noted that the school principalship, in general, has recently been experiencing a "re-discovery" as the focus of considerable work and attention by numerous scholars. Ever since the school effectiveness movement proclaimed that the principal is a key component of productive schools (Edmonds, 1979; Brookover & Lezotte, 1980), there has been widespread and general acceptance of the view that the principalship is indeed worthy of much attention and support by theorists, researchers, and practitioners alike. In recent years, then, there has been increasing interest in describing the principalship in ways that help to understand the unique features of that role. A number of studies have served to establish the fact that, while the behavior of principals might in fact be the single most important determinant of school effectiveness (Austin, 1979; Lipham, 1981), there are also important characteristics that are endemic to the daily life of the building administrators, and that these features often serve to prevent, or at least inhibit considerably, the potential

ability of an individual to "make a difference" in his or her building (Willis, 1980; Peterson, 1982; Kmetz & Willover, 1982; Lortie, Crow, & Prolman, 1983). As Mintzberg suggested in his classic study of the work of managers (1978), there is a need to view the school principal's job as one of mobility, fragmentation, and urgency. The problem with such an analysis of the daily life of school building administrators, particularly as it might apply to those who are first being socialized to the principalship, is that it paints a picture of an environment where it is unlikely that someone can bring about school improvement and necessary change in a stable, wholistic, and calm fashion.

The importance of the principal's role is even more precisely tied to the expectation that the individual fulfilling this role serve as an instructional leader (Cavelti, 1980; Cotton & Savard, 1980; Purkey & Smith, 1982). Beginning principals in recent years have been well aware of the expectation that they would in some way exemplify this image of the principal not only as an efficient building manager, but also as an effective instructional leader. The desire for new administrators to take on this image for their role is complicated greatly by the fact that, while instructional leadership sounds as if it is something desirable and immediately attainable, no clear and generally accepted definition of this term is readily available to guide the development of beginning principals. Mulhauser (1983) alluded to this point when he observed that the principal of effective schools must be viewed as a strong instructional leader; "unfortunately, few of the studies [of instructional leadership] offer much behavior guidance to a principal wondering what to do along those lines."

What currently exists, then, is a very strong image of the importance of the role of the school principal, particularly as he or she engages in something that is vague, but defined as "instructional leadership."

Beginning Principals

If the predictions of many state education agencies, professional associations for school administrators, and university placement officials are accurate, the next few years should offer some excellent career opportunities for men and women who will be seeking elementary and secondary school principalships across the nation. Due to a variety of factors, including school board-sponsored "buy-outs" based on length of service and other forms of incentives for early retirements, significant decreases in the number of people who will be initially entering the field of professional education, and increases in the student enrollments of some school districts, there will likely be a need for a substantial number of new principals in the foreseeable future (Daresh, 1986). Not all principalships, of course, will be filled by people without any previous administrative experience; many open positions will attract present principals who wish to move to different schools, or assistant principals, supervisors, or other individuals not currently in principalships but having experience and backgrounds in formal leadership roles. However, there will probably be a great influx of newcomers to the field of school administration. Thus, there will be some tremendous opportunities for school systems to "stock the pond" by finding some new people who might begin the process of suggesting new ideas and new solutions to school systems faced with many old problems. Unfortunately, there is a strong likelihood that many inexperienced principals will fail when confronted by the first challenges inherent in a position of educational leadership.

The issue of the training and preparation needs for beginning principals would seem to be one that is viewed as extremely important and selected as worthy of review by many researchers. It is surprising, however, to note that relatively few studies of this topic have been carried out during the past few years. Among the investigations completed recently have been small-scale studies

conducted in Great Britain by Nockels (1981) and Turner (1981), and doctoral research in the United States by Marrion (1983) and Sussman (1985). A common findings in these works was that the beginning year of the school principalship is typically full of a great amount of frustration and anxiety, and that preservice programs designed to prepare individuals for the role of the principal must represent cooperative efforts involving local school systems, professional associations, and universities.

Another recent study of a much wider scale has been the work by the British National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Weindling & Earley, 1987). This ambitious work reviewed the characteristics of the first years of secondary school heads throughout the United Kingdom. Interviews were conducted of beginning principals, their teaching staffs, and their administrative superiors to determine the ways in which principals achieved success in their positions, along with the nature of frustrations felt by the administrators. The study examined such issues as the paths typically followed to the principalship, preparation programs, district support mechanisms, and relationships existing between the heads of schools and their management teams. Among the many very strong recommendations forthcoming from this study is that beginning principals need to receive special consideration and support from their employing school systems if they are to achieve any degree of success. Weindling and Earley noted that a major problem for heads has been isolation from peers. Accordingly, if improvements are to take place in the socialization process for educational leadership, something must be done to reduce this alienation.

The study that serves as the focal work in this paper was a small-scale investigation of 12 first and second principals (both elementary and secondary) in one midwestern state (Daresh, 1986). Characteristics of the principals are shown in Appendix I of this paper. The basic methodology utilized to collect the data for this study consisted of

intensive, in-depth interviews conducted of the principals. With two exceptions, these interviews were carried out on-site at the principals' schools. Although many specific questions were asked, the ones which provided the most relevant information to this paper were:

- What surprises have you experienced on the job so far?
- What features of the job have inhibited you from attaining the goals you had when you first started?
- In what ways could your experience have been made more successful?

The responses of the beginning principals interviewed provided some important insights into the type of professional lives they lead, and more importantly, the ways in which those lives might be made much more satisfying.

The focus of the study here was to review some of the major problems and issues that appear to be characteristics of the beginning years of the school principalship. Included will be a series of recommendations proposed for helping school district policy makers and others who are interested in the professional development and preparation of school principals to consider these characteristics and plan for strengthening the potential leadership contributions of incoming administrators. It would be highly unrealistic, of course, to assume that any analyses or set of recommendations could be formulated to ensure absolute success for individuals selecting careers in the principalship. Nevertheless, an assumption made here is that, insofar as the beginning principalship is concerned, more attention is better, and that this issue has been so generally overlooked in the literature that any attempt to clarify the conditions associated with more effective practice should be welcome.

Concerns of Beginning Principals

Interviews conducted of first and second year building administrators indicated that the concerns of beginning principals can be found in three distinct areas. These are: (a) problems with role clarification, (b) limitations on technical expertise, and (c) difficulties with socialization to the profession and individual school systems.

Role Clarification

A recurring theme of beginning principals was their apparent questioning of career choice. Most of the administrators interviewed seemed to be asking, "How did I get into this spot?" This issue was not a true expression of discontent with one's career choice. Rather, it seemed to be a voiced concern that the path taken was never fully understood at the time it was initially selected.

A typical route to the principal's office involves the decision to leave the classroom teacher's role, usually after taking some graduate-level coursework at a local university to gain approval or certification in administration from a state education agency. Then, the properly certified candidate is selected (some might even say "anointed") to a leadership position in a school. Although at least half of the states currently require that aspiring school administrators participate in some sort of university-sponsored field experience, internship, or some other form of structured practicum as part of the normal licensing procedures (Gousha, LoPresti, & Jones, 1986), these field-based activities are usually short-term, perfunctory exercises that do not actually require the student to assume the principal's job for any appreciable length of time (Daresh & LaPlant, 1985). In short, administrative practica are usually even less satisfying as vehicles for professional induction than are student

teaching programs for undergraduates, and the criticisms and problems inherent in student teaching are legendary.

One of the specific deficiencies related to role clarification described by several of the beginning principals dealt with the extent to which first and second year administrators believed in, or at least felt comfortable with, the authority and leadership role that had been assigned to them. As one principal observed:

> I knew that I was supposed to be in charge, but I really was unprepared to deal with having real authority and leadership responsibility. I just wasn't comfortable with it at first.

What many of the principals seemed to be saying was that, while it was pleasant and personally satisfying to be called "the boss," few could imagine all of the responsibilities that were associated with that title until actually living in that role. Thus, a real and persistent problem faced by beginning school administrators involved the ability to comprehend clearly the precise nature of the new position. This has also been a strong finding in the NFER study of first year secondary school heads in Great Britain:

> Despite having been told about various aspects and having worked with heads, the initial experience of being a head and sitting in the "hot seat" still comes as a shock. It is difficult to prepare deputies for this aspect, as it obviously needs to be experienced first hand (Weindling & Earley, 1987, p. 50).

Very few people entering the field of school administration ever stop to question themselves as to what it really means to be a leader, and how to manage and understand the increased power and formal authority that automatically accompany the title of principal. None of

the individuals interviewed expressed such a high degree of frustration that they wanted to leave the principalship. On the other hand, a real and persistent problem faced by beginning administrators involves the ability to comprehend clearly the nature of the new position.

Technical Expertise

Two categories of concerns were encountered by the novice principal in the area of technical expertise. The first may be referred to as mechanical or procedural issues. The second deals with interpersonal relations skills needed on the job.

Procedural concerns include a wide variety of issues related to the principal's job and for which the administrators in the earliest stages of their professional careers felt ill-prepared. Examples include such normal "how-to" concerns as how to read computer printouts provided by the district business office, how to address various legal issues, how to budget (both material resources and personal time), or how to implement, coordinate, or report system-specific mandates. An example of this type of issue was provided by one elementary school principal who remarked:

> I really felt at a loss when I first got into the job--particularly with learning how to cope with all the forms they [the central office] wanted me to fill out at the start of the school year. I didn't know where to start! Thank goodness that the old advice about relying on a good secretary was true in my case.

The comments of this one principal were certainly not unique. In fact, if any one single area of beginning administrator concern could be classified as most powerful, this area of a perceived lack of technical expertise related to how to follow established procedures was

it. The general sentiment among the principals was that a high percentage of their concerns over lack of procedural skills was related to the requirements of individual school districts, and that preservice preparation to cope with these issues would have been difficult if not impossible. Others felt that they would have been better prepared earlier had someone or some training institution provided them with a tool kit of skills that could be used in predictable situations. Thus, suggestions were made for more (or at least better and more practical) university courses in school budgeting, personnel and collective bargaining, law, and computer technology.

In the area of interpersonal relations, the new principals' needs included such issues as better conflict management skills, improved school-community relations, and decreased tension with teachers concerning the performance of assigned job responsibilities and evaluation practices. Interpersonal conflict was a major concern of many of the respondents:

> I was really most surprised with the amount of conflict I saw everyday as part of my job--with kids, with parents, with the central office, and with the teachers. I couldn't seem to please everybody all the time, and I felt I should... It was really disappointing with the teachers--the people I was a part of only last year. Now they have little to do with me, except to get permission to do things, or for gripes.

Principals also indicated that they wished that they had better appreciation by others of their own interpersonal needs. They reported getting feedback from teachers regarding the positive aspects of their job performance:

> People are not really reluctant to march into my office and tell me if they disagree with me. But no one says anything to me in terms of a general assessment of my performance. And particularly, no one marches in to say that they think I'm doing a great job!

Several principals admitted to feeling a general sort of anxiety related to their job, attributable in their minds mostly to a sense of a lack of self-confidence. They never knew if they were really doing what was considered to be a good job, and no one in their schools or districts appeared inclined to provide much feedback or direction to help them understand how they were doing. This lack of feedback was an issue that principals felt from every level of the organization--superiors, peers, and subordinates. The generalization could therefore be made that beginning principals felt that they lacked not only an information base concerning effective ways of handling situations with the people in their schools, but also strategies for gaining interpersonal support from others.

Socialization to the Profession and System

The third major category of concerns facing beginning principals could be described as issues related to how people learn how to act in their position--socialization to the profession. Specific examples of needs and concerns in this category were somewhat less concrete than were the issues described in the earlier areas. Here, people seemed to be talking primarily of their needs to learn more specifically "how to read" the signs of the systems in which they worked: How were principals "supposed" to act? This was not limited solely to issues related to expectations for professional behavior--such as how to dress, whether or not to attend school board meetings, and which community organizations one was expected to join--although these

concerns were certainly felt by the beginning administrators. Even more of an issue were the implicit expectations felt in most school districts that principals, regardless of whether they were newcomers or veterans, should somehow understand the proper routes to be taken in order to survive and to solve problems in their buildings.

For example, one principal indicated that he felt rather foolish after following the procedures outlined in the school board policy manual regarding requests for new equipment for his building. Stated policy required that a formal application by the principal be filed with the assistant superintendent in charge of administrative services. Instead, after not getting any action on the piece of requested equipment that he felt he deserved, he found out that the "real" way things like that happened in his school system was for the principal to deal directly with the director of buildings and grounds and not bother the assistant superintendent who, after all, was too busy dealing with other matters which were not listed as his responsibility in the policy manual. The new principal discovered this discrepancy between stated policy and real procedure only after talking to another, more experienced principal who noted that the request for equipment would probably only gather dust "in somebody's in-basket" and would never be acted upon if "normal channels" were followed.

Beginning principals, particularly if they came from a school district other than the one which subsequently employed them, felt vulnerable to the effects of a social and political system they did not fully comprehend. This lack of "knowing the ropes" in a particular school or district was no small concern to first and second year administrators who desperately wanted to feel as if they could be respected in the system.

The list of specific concerns, needs, interests, feelings of deficiency, and other wants of beginning principals is a long one indeed. This attempt to organize individual items into the three major categories is not meant to trivialize the importance of any specific

issue. Nevertheless, even in this simplified listing of problems encountered by beginning administrators, it is clear that much time, energy, and talent is spent trying to respond to a group of particular concerns. The assumption might then be made that, if strategies could be developed to minimize the importance of these issues on administrators, principals might be able to be more attentive to duties that would increase the effectiveness of their schools. As a result, the needed focus on the improvement of instructional leadership skills so necessary to make schools more successful could be a part of the interests of beginning principals; survival on the job would not be an all-consuming interest.

Suggestions for Support

The observations concerning the general categories of concerns faced by first and second year principals presented to this point offer some information that may be utilized as the foundation for strategies that may be used in changing existing policy and practice. These changes, in turn, can enable school administrators in the earliest stages of their careers to have more satisfying and successful experiences.

Two important assumptions made early as part of this discussion should be noted. The first is that there is some inherent value in supporting the work of beginning principals, and that such individuals are, in fact, worth trying to save and make as successful as possible. The second assumption is that, despite the development of supportive practices and policies, some people who enter the field of administration will fail. No one can force another person to be successful and effective, and all the best plans made to support people will not work if the people themselves do not take the necessary steps to succeed. In any case, support mechanisms can be identified to assist beginning principals in dealing with their frustrations related

to role clarification, technical expertise, and socialization.

Support for Role Clarification

One of the issues that must be addressed when attempting to reduce frustrations related to individuals' sense of the lack of role definition is the extent to which people are provided with an accurate view of what the principalship is supposed to be before they get there. In this regard, universities involved with the preservice preparation and training of school administrators have a critical role to play.

For example, existing approaches to what is commonly referred to as "experiential learning" (i.e., practica, planned field experiences, and internships) utilized in the preservice preparation of principals are not generally sufficient in their ability to enable people to experience the world of administration before they take their first job. Currently, such activities for training future administrators usually consist of synthetic situations wherein aspiring principals, in most cases full-time teachers unable to get district support and approval for release time, find some quasi-administrative tasks that can be performed during time that is not assigned during the school day to teaching or other duties. As a result, people are being prepared to serve as instructional leaders by spending five to ten hours per week supervising bus loadings, calling the homes of truant students, filling out forms for the central office or the state department of education, or devising new student handbooks, These activities are, no doubt, useful for the smooth operation of a school, and many practicing administrators are engaged in these activities every day. However, to rely on projects such as these to give anyone a clear picture of the multifaceted nature of most principals' jobs is truly ludicrous.

Instead, people need a different type of practicum, an opportunity to get not only a glimpse of the principal's world, but also a chance to live in that world and actually be held accountable for decisions

that are made. Such a learning experience would be a more useful way to help men and women understand more precisely what it is they are getting into for a career. Learning to be a principal by engaging in field activities must go beyond the current ritual of allowing aspiring administrators to practice limited skills in the field. Instead, the focus needs to be placed on increasing future administrators' awareness of some of the "realities" of the principal's job noted by Barth (1980): Imbalance of responsibility and authority, isolation on the job, time constraints, and the continuing competing expectations for service as a building manager as contrasted with instructional leadership duties.

In addition to increasing the types of experiences to which the aspiring principal will be exposed as part of his or her preservice field work or practicum, work must also be done to ensure that such practice will actually serve as opportunities for true experiential learning. Kendall and her associates (1986) with the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education have noted that experiential education is something that goes considerably beyond merely providing people with places to watch and other people to learn from while doing activities in "real life" settings. Instead, it is necessary to go beyond "hands-on" learning to include an opportunity for students to engage in considerable reflection regarding the purpose of the skills being acquired, as well as the ways in which the skills might "fit" with some personalized understandings of administration. Rarely do existing preservice preparation programs for principals include sufficient opportunity for future administrators to step back from the acquisition of new knowledge and skills to wonder, "Why?" (Daresh, 1986). Enabling individuals to engage in this type of activity would be a significant improvement in the programs that were followed by the principals intervieved as part of this study and who indicated that, for the most part, they were surprised at seeing themselves in the role of the school principal.

Obviously, efforts to make preservice practica more valuable learning experiences will require modifications in policies and practices, particularly in local school districts, universities, and state education agencies. At the local school district level, thought needs to be given to finding ways to provide release time and others support for those who are to be prepared and groomed for future leadership positions. Those who have the interest and ability to serve as administrators need to be placed, even briefly, into situations where they may "play at" being principals. This can be accomplished simply by allowing qualified teachers to take time to observe administrators intensively for a few days, or to assume intern administrative positions for a longer period of time. Another strategy being utilized with increased frequency is the designation of selected teachers on a staff as "lead teachers" who serve as building administrators when the principal must be absent from time to time. This method was noted as a particularly effective preservice training procedure by Weindling and Earley (1987). In any of these ways, first year, on-the-job "surprises" might be reduced considerably. A peripheral value of districts assisting teachers to see more clearly what administration is all about may be that some staff members will decide, after participating in a solid practicum, that administration is not the avenue that they wish to follow, and that they are truly more satisfied and content with their work in the classroom.

Universities also have the opportunity to improve the quality of practica and reduce the culture shock so often experienced by new administrators. In a recent study of field-based training programs in universities across the United States and Canada (Daresh & LaPlant, 1985), we found that most universities simply do not seem committed to the potential value of such activities. Most planned field experiences, for example, are supervised by one faculty member (often a part-time, adjunct professor) who has many other assignments competing for his or her time and attention. Field-based training, as currently

designed, is frequently described in gloving terms as some sort of "perfect" blend of theory and practice. In reality, it usually is not; it is rather something that is carried out through what appear to be add-on activities that are not essential features of educational administration programs.

Universities need to examine their commitment to this aspect of preservice preparation and, if necessary, reconceptualize their existing programs and dedicate sufficient amounts of time, money and professional expertise, as well as institutional prestige to field-based learning. Faculties need to look seriously at the value that they place on students learning by doing. If there is consensus that field experiences and practica are not important, then perhaps a faculty may need to reconsider its own collective vision of how it plans to help prepare future educational leaders. The practitioners interviewed for this study typically said that they needed more, not less, contact with administrative roles before getting to the principal's office. Universities need to make certain that such contact is meaningful and thoughtfully-directed toward some defined goals. If it is not, field experiences may become little more than opportunities for administrators to find "cheap labor" to do simple tasks around their schools, the sharing of war stories, or exercises in "monkey-see, monkey-do."

Finally, state education agencies might take on a role of encouraging, if not mandating, that people seeking administrative certification spend increasing amounts of time in quality, on-the-job learning experiences. Incentives may also be forthcoming to school districts in the form of financial support that would help school systems pay for the substitute teachers that may be required to provide release time when teachers are engaged in field experiences outside their classrooms. Another possibility might be to seek state support of stipends to be paid to administrative interns at selected school districts. Competition for such resources might be stiff, but the

argument may be advanced that such rivalry will actually encourage more effective programs over time. Furthermore, there may be some considerable advantage in promoting arrangements that may serve to decrease the number of individuals seeking administrative certification in a state. While it is true that more and more principalships will be open in the immediate future, it is also true that there is no shortage of students currently enrolled in educational administration programs at universities. Whether or not the majority of these students are in fact likely candidates as effective future principals is not clear. The problem today is certainly not one of quantity for aspiring administrators; it is, instead, one of potential quality for school principals.

Support for Technical Assistance

New administrators often indicate that they need more information about law, school finance and business management, teacher evaluation procedures, computer technology and its application to education, and numerous other, similar issues that are related to daily, practical concerns. Workshops, seminars, and training institutes of short duration can be designed with relative ease to provide for these needs. In particular, short-term training of this type can be tailored to the specific needs and interests of beginning school administrators. This type of targeted inservice is another suggestion derived very directly from the study of beginning principals. Training programs that introduce alternative ways of dealing with stress, managing (but certainly not erasing) conflict, improving conferencing skills, or increasing strategies to be utilized to enhance the quality of home-school-community relations may be effective and have a significant impact on the ability of principals to work with the people who are in and around their schools. Such training might be provided from a number of different sources, including the school districts that employ

the beginning principals, professional associations for school administrators, or even local universities that would view their administrative preparation programs in terms of a mission that would include inservice as well as preservice education.

Another implication for the improvement of practice derived from the study of beginning principals is that ways need to be identified to ensure that, wherever possible, new administrators are not left totally alone and isolated from colleagues as they try to cope with problems in their schools. It is already well-known that a serious problem for classroom teachers i that they spend the majority of their time isolated from their co-workers (Lieberman & Miller, 1984). The non-existence of collegial support on the job is indeed a negative aspect of daily life in schools. This lack of a norm of collegiality is a major shortcoming that plagues the role of the principal as well (Jackson, 1977; Barth, 1980). As a result, principals--both beginners and veterans--might be encouraged to find ways to work together in a sort of "buddy system" that would enable pairs or small groups to work toward arrangements where advice and honest feedback from peers might be more readily available. Structured opportunities for greater collegial support in inservice activities such as the Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) program developed by the Far West Regional Educational Laboratory (Barnett, 1985) or the Principals' Inservice Program sponsored by /I/D/E/A/ (LaPlant, 1979) hold considerable promise as strategies to be used in reducing the feelings of isolation which so often restrict building principals from being as effective as they might be.

Support for Socialization

The last major area of concern for beginning principals is the notion of the goodness of "fit" into the profession of school administration in general, or with the norms and expectations of a

particular school system. This issue is tied closely to the need for greater attention to the support for interpersonal skills needed to perform the job effectively. Administrators need to be provided with accurate messages related to the "way things are done" in the field. The "buddy system" mentioned earlier, or some other well-developed mentor system, could be effective strategies to address this issue.

Beginning principals need patient mentors who would be available to talk about concerns that arise on the job, but are not necessarily covered in the school board's formal policies and procedures. There are literally hundreds of situations that arise in the life of a new school principal which might have a great impact on the success or failure of a person's career. People in organizations are often judged, fairly or not, by ways in which they are able to interpret subtle signals, a task that is difficult to do without help. One observation that needs to be added about the nature of effective mentor relationships is that mentors must not assume the role of telling what beginning principals are supposed to do. Rather, effective mentors are able to guide their advisees so that they are able to make their own choices of behavior, based on an understanding of potential consequences of their choices. Mentors who would try to make inexperienced principals behave as they would are probably not mentors at all.

Once again, formal preservice preparation programs may play an important part in assisting future beginning principals to have less difficulty with the process of socialization to their jobs. At present, preparation programs focus much of their energy on providing students with an abundance of information related to specific skills that are associated with the work of school administrators. There is no doubt that this type of instruction must continue. On the other hand, university programs that infer that individuals who excel in the performance of the acquired skills are automatically defined as "experts" and quality administrators are not addressing the need for

future administrators to realize that there will be times in their work when they do not know all the answers. Future principals need to be filled not only with information, but also with a spirit and desire to learn more on the job. No one can truly know everything that will always be needed to perform as a school administrator, with all people, and under all conditions. University programs might do well to spend some time assisting aspiring administrators to understand that part of their role may, in fact, require the ability to ask the right questions and know when one does not know the answer. Reliance on the insights and knowledge of others need not be viewed as some sort of weakness for school administrators, but rather as a way to make the organization much more effective.

Summary

In this paper, limitations on the effectiveness and leadership potential of first and second year principals were described according to the ways in which beginning administrators explained limitations on their ability to do the job they wanted to do when they were first hired. These limitations came from three general areas of problems found in the first years of an administrative career, namely, problems with role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulty with socialization to the profession at large and to the norms of specific school systems. For each of these problematic areas, suggestions were made concerning ways that might be used to reduce the feelings of isolation, anxiety, and ineffectiveness often described by those in their first jobs. Local school districts, universities, state education agencies, and administrators' professional associations have been suggested as organizations with a legitimate stake in trying to assure some degree of successful performance by beginning administrators.

One final caution, however, is in the form of a challenge to those

who might be responsible for initiating any of the improvements that were suggested here. Although the varied needs of beginning principals might be addressed in many ways, including structured inservice activities, these approaches will likely be little more than window dressings for a district, university, state department, or professional association unless also accompanied by a belief that support for school administrators is truly worth the effort, and that when structured activities are not effective, even more support must be provided. Workshops, seminars, institutes, planned field experiences, and mentor programs are all likely to be ineffective strategies unless they are designed and carried out with the sincere desire to make sure that principals will be successful.

If inservice is provided only because it "looks good" or if professional development consists only of sending people to conferences or workshops without examining individual needs, interests, and concerns, no one will profit except the providers of the workshops and conferences. The only way to maximize the talents of people in any organization is to assume that talents indeed truly exist in the first place, and that everything that can be done to help will be done. Through such assumptions, beliefs, and practices it will be possible to assist leaders in overcoming the first and highest hurdles in their path leading to effectiveness.

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APPENDIX I

PRINCIPAL	SEX	AGE	LEVEL OF SCHOOL	POSITION LAST YEAR
1	F	27	Elementary	Teacher
2	F	30	Elementary	Teacher
3	F	34	Elementary	Assistant Principal
4	M	36	High School	Supervisor
5	M	32	High School	Assistant Principal
6	M	30	Middle/Junior High	Principal(1)
7	F	33	Middle/Junior High	Teacher
8	F	28	Elementary	Supervisor
9	M	41	High School	Graduate Student(2)
10	M	29	Middle/Junior High	Teacher
11	F	31	Elementary	Principal(3)
12	M	33	High School	Assistant Principal

Selected background characteristics of the beginning principals.

(1) Named principal mid-way through the previous year. Had been an assistant principal.

(2) Prior to entering a full-time graduate program, had been an assistant principal.

(3) Was a classroom teacher two years ago.